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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 001249

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: UGANDA: MUSEVENI AND NRM SPEAK OUT AGAINST TORTURE

REF: A. KAMPALA 01218

[1](#)B. KAMPALA 01074

[1](#)C. KAMPALA 01075

[1](#)D. STATE 67260

[1](#)E. KAMPALA 00462

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Aaron Sampson for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) President Museveni vowed on October 14 to "severely" punish any Ugandan security officials guilty of torture, and a senior National Resistance Movement (NRM) spokesperson also condemned the use of torture. While Ugandan officials continue to say the right things, their willingness to restrain the paramilitary outfits most often linked to torture allegations remains uncertain. The recent cosmetic reshuffle of the Police's Rapid Response Unit (RRU) following high profile allegations of illegal detention and torture, and a closed trial against the head of the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI) over torture charges, provide two examples of the gray area between words and deeds when it comes to eliminating torture in Uganda. End Summary.

Museveni: Torturers Will be Punished

[1](#)2. (SBU) President Museveni told assembled local journalists on October 14 that anyone guilty of torturing Ugandans "will definitely be punished severely." Museveni was responding to a question about Uganda's efforts to eliminate torture in light of the recently released Ugandan Human Rights Commission (UHRC) report for 2008 (ref. A). The report identified state security agencies as Uganda's leading human rights abusers. Admitting that he had not yet read the UHRC report, Museveni nevertheless said he expects the "leaders of security agencies to follow up the allegations. If they are true...Luzira Prison is the address for such people who break laws. Anybody breaking the law will go there."

[1](#)3. (SBU) Museveni also fielded a question from Reuters on the September 11 arrest and beating of journalist Robert Kalundi Sserumaga (ref. B). Museveni said he saw no problem with arresting individuals if they break the law, but that he would have to follow up on allegations that Sserumaga was bundled into the trunk of a car. "The manner of the arrest," said the President, "is what we don't accept. Someone should be arrested in a civilized manner." NOTE: Although Reuters and others continue to report that Sserumaga was forced into a trunk, Sserumaga told us he was put in the back seat of an unmarked vehicle by unidentified men. END NOTE.

NRM: Torture By State Security Services Shameful

[1](#)4. (SBU) On Oct. 18, NRM deputy spokesperson Ofwono Opondo described the UHRC's findings as a "stinging report

indicting" the military (UPDF), police and prisons. Opondo said it was a "shame" that the UPDF and the police topped the UHRC's 2008 list of human rights offenders. "Reports of continued abuse," said Opondo, "both in gazetted and non-gazetted places of detention alongside rampant corruption, serves as a rude and sad reminder that the NRM needs to tighten its noose around the necks of perpetrators of these crimes." Opondo noted that "all the security services (the UPDF, the Police, prisons, and intelligence agencies) today have highly educated and politically conscious personnel and it surprises that torture still exists in their ranks. It is also shocking to learn that for the last 10 years, Parliament has never found it necessary to discuss and enforce reports and recommendations of the UHRC to which it allocates money annually."

Torture Allegations against the RRU and CMI

15. (C) On October 17 the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Maj. Gen. Kale Kayihura, reshuffled the Police's Rapid Response Unit (RRU) after the wife of the Executive Director of Uganda's National Forestry Authority accused the RRU of threatening torture while illegally detaining her for more than a week. The Forestry Director and his wife are allegedly involved in a USD 450,000 embezzlement scandal. According to local media reports, the police reassigned the RRU's Director, Commandant Emmanuel Muhairwe, and two deputies, Peter Kakonge and Emmanuel Bwembale, to extended study leave. Maj. Gen. Kayihura named David Magara as interim RRU director. Magara, a known human rights violator

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(ref. D), was the RRU Director until March 2009, when he was reassigned as Deputy Director of the Criminal Investigations Directorate.

16. (SBU) Meanwhile, a torture case against the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI) levied by Mayor of Hoima, Francis Atugonza, is proceeding behind closed doors at Uganda's High Court. Atugonza (who is also the Forum for Democracy and Change (FDC) party's Trade and Industry Secretary) alleges he was tortured by soldiers attached to the Joint Anti-Terrorism Taskforce (JATT) in April 2009. The JATT, which is a paramilitary unit composed of members from various security agencies, operates under CMI authority. Defendants in the case are CMI Director Brig. Gen. James Mugira, Maj. Benson Monday, Maj. Abel Kandiho, Lt. C.K. Assiimwe, and Lt. Alex Tumushabe.

17. (SBU) High Court Justice Yorokamu Bamwine barred the public from court proceedings in the interests of national security. Atugonza alleges he was arrested, beaten and detained at a CMI "safe house" next door to the Danish Embassy in Kampala. FDC president Kizza Besigye previously threatened to sue Minister of Security Amama Mbabazi over Atugonza's treatment, but FDC lawyers reportedly advised against this course of action. CMI Chief Mugira has said he was out of the country at the time of Atugonza's arrest and that the CMI does not use torture.

18. (C) On October 24 the Chairman of the UHRC told the Mission that he had sent a letter to IGP Kayihura asking for an internal police investigation of the RRU. The UHRC Chairman also described the court case against the CMI as a positive development because it marks an attempt to hold specific individual officers responsible for illegal practices.

Comment: Words vs. Action

19. (C) We continue to regard the leadership of the JATT, CMI, RRU, and Internal Security Organization (ISO)

accountable for the actions of their organizations (ref. E).
Parliamentary passage of pending anti-torture legislation
would go a long way towards backing up and giving meaning to
verbal pronouncements against torture articulated by
President Museveni and others.
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